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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/252,574	02/18/1999	JAY S. WALKER	3553-4018	4666

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MORGAN & FINNEGAN, L.L.P.  
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EXAMINER

ROSEN, NICHOLAS D

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3625

DATE MAILED: 11/30/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

# Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/252,574

Applicant(s)

WALKER ET AL.

Examiner

Nicholas D. Rosen

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*WJ*

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

## Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

## Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 04 October 2004.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

## Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 2-16 and 29-43 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 2-16 and 29-43 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

## Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 24 May 1999 is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

## Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

## Attachment(s)

- ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_.

Claims 2-16 and 29-43 have been examined.

***Request for Continued Examination***

All claims are drawn to the same invention claimed in the application prior to the entry of the submission under 37 CFR 1.114 and could have been finally rejected on the grounds and art of record in the next Office action if they had been entered in the application prior to entry under 37 CFR 1.114. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL** even though it is a first action after the filing of a request for continued examination and the submission under 37 CFR 1.114. See MPEP § 706.07(b). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire **THREE MONTHS** from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within **TWO MONTHS** of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the **THREE-MONTH** shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than **SIX MONTHS** from the mailing date of this final action.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101***

35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

Claim 5 and dependent claims 2-4, 6-8, 11, and 13-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter. The claims are directed to a method not within the technological arts ("technological arts" being considered equivalent to "useful arts," mentioned in Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution, saying that Congress shall have "power to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writing and Discoveries" – see *In re Musgrave*, 431 F.2d 882, 167 USPQ [CCPA 1970]). The claims are directed to a method that does nothing more than manipulate an abstract idea. To be patentable, a method claim must produce a useful, concrete, and tangible result, or involve a step or act of manipulating technology (see *AT&T v. Excel Communications Inc.*, 172 F.3d at 1358, 50 USPQ 2d. at 1452). Allocating conditional purchase offers to sellers may be, in a sense, useful, but is not concrete or tangible, and does not, as recited in claims 2-8, 11, and 13-16, involve technology.

Claim 9 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter. The claims are directed to a method not within the technological arts ("technological arts" being considered equivalent to "useful arts," mentioned in Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution, saying that Congress shall have "power to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writing and Discoveries" – see *In re Musgrave*, 431 F.2d 882, 167 USPQ [CCPA 1970]). The claims are directed to a method that does nothing more than manipulate an abstract

idea. To be patentable, a method claim must produce a useful, concrete, and tangible result, or involve a step or act of manipulating technology (see *AT&T v. Excel Communications Inc.*, 172 F.3d at 1358, 50 USPQ 2d. at 1452). Allocating conditional purchase offers to sellers may be, in a sense, useful, but is not concrete or tangible, and does not, as recited in claim 9, involve technology.

Claim 10 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter. The claims are directed to a method not within the technological arts ("technological arts" being considered equivalent to "useful arts," mentioned in Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution, saying that Congress shall have "power to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writing and Discoveries" – see *In re Musgrave*, 431 F.2d 882, 167 USPQ [CCPA 1970]). The claims are directed to a method that does nothing more than manipulate an abstract idea. To be patentable, a method claim must produce a useful, concrete, and tangible result, or involve a step or act of manipulating technology (see *AT&T v. Excel Communications Inc.*, 172 F.3d at 1358, 50 USPQ 2d. at 1452). Allocating conditional purchase offers to sellers may be, in a sense, useful, but is not concrete or tangible, and does not, as recited in claim 10, involve technology.

Claim 12 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter. The claims are directed to a method not within the technological arts ("technological arts" being considered equivalent to "useful arts," mentioned in Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution, saying that Congress

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shall have "power to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writing and Discoveries" – see *In re Musgrave*, 431 F.2d 882, 167 USPQ [CCPA 1970]). The claims are directed to a method that does nothing more than manipulate an abstract idea. To be patentable, a method claim must produce a useful, concrete, and tangible result, or involve a step or act of manipulating technology (see *AT&T v. Excel Communications Inc.*, 172 F.3d at 1358, 50 USPQ 2d. at 1452). Allocating conditional purchase offers to sellers may be, in a sense, useful, but is not concrete or tangible, and does not, as recited in claim 12, involve technology.

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to

consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

**Claims 2-8, 11, and 13-16**

Claim 5 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hensley in view of Abel et al. (5,289,371) and official notice. Hensley discloses an allocation method in a buyer-driven system in which conditional purchase offers can be received and considered by or on behalf of a plurality of sellers, the conditional purchase offers including a buyer-specified price for a good or service (first page, fourteenth text paragraph et subseq.). Hensley does not expressly disclose identifying one of at least two sellers as a priority seller, but by beginning with a particular seller, while knowing that there was another shop down the street (second page, fourth, fifth, and ninth paragraphs), Hensley implicitly identified that seller as a priority seller. Hensley discloses providing the priority seller with a first look opportunity to satisfy a conditional purchase offer (first page).

Hensley does not expressly disclose determining which of at least two sellers can satisfy a conditional purchase offer before identifying one as a priority seller, but does disclose determining that one seller could satisfy a conditional purchase offer (by seeing the desired product in his shop, first page). Abel teaches sending floral orders to a plurality of florists, not druggists or auto mechanics, but persons or firms whose participation in the flower business has given evidence of their ability to satisfy an order to deliver flowers (column 11, lines 16-41). Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to determine

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which of at least two sellers could satisfy a conditional purchase offer before identifying one as a priority seller, for the obvious advantage of saving time, effort, and the disclosure of information which one might wish to keep confidential by making offers to persons or firms unable to satisfy the offers.

Hensley does not disclose that conditional purchase offers include a payment identifier specifying a financial account identifier to be used to pay for the good or service upon acceptance of a conditional purchase offer by a seller, but official notice is taken that it is well known to specify financial account identifiers (see Table 3 in Abel, for example). Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to have conditional purchase offers include payment identifiers specifying financial accounts, for the obvious advantage of providing evidence of a buyer's ability and willingness to pay, as well as for enabling actual payment upon the acceptance of a conditional purchase offer.

Hensley does not disclose that providing the priority seller with a first look opportunity to satisfy a conditional purchase offer is done after receiving the buyer-specified price, payment identifier, and authorization, but Abel teaches that payments are made immediately through subscriber's credit card accounts, implying that payment identifiers (e.g., credit card numbers) and authorizations have been received (column 13, line 55, through column 14, line 10). Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to provide the priority seller with a first look opportunity to satisfy a conditional purchase offer after



receiving the buyer-specified price, payment identifier, and authorization, for the obvious advantage of payments through credit card or other accounts to be lawfully carried out.

Claim 2 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hensley, Abel, and official notice as applied to claim 5 above. Hensley does not expressly disclose that he provided another of at least two sellers with a second look opportunity to satisfy the conditional purchase offer, but does state that it would have been possible to do so, and that this was widely known (second page, paragraphs, four, five, and nine). Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to provide another of the at least two sellers with a second look opportunity to satisfy the conditional purchase offer, for the obvious advantage of giving the buyer another chance to obtain something that the priority seller was unable or unwilling to sell at a price acceptable to the buyer.

Claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hensley, Abel, and official notice as applied to claim 5 above, and further in view of Donner et al. (European Patent Application 0 512 702 A2). Hensley does not expressly disclose binding the buyer to the conditional purchase offer, but Donner et al. disclose this (page 3, lines 2-8). (See also page 6, lines 3-18, for more on conditional purchase offers in Donner et al.) Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to bind the buyer to the conditional purchase offer, for the obvious advantage of assuring the seller that responding to the conditional purchase offer would be worth his time and trouble.

Claim 4 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hensley, Abel, and official notice as applied to claim 5 above. Hensley discloses notifying the buyer that the conditional purchase offer will not be satisfied (by a head shake, first page; admittedly the notification was withdrawn, but the buyer was nonetheless notified).

Claim 6 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hensley, and Abel, and official notice as applied to claim 5 above, and further in view of Donner et al. Hensley does not disclose that one of the at least two sellers is an agency-based seller, but Donner et al. teach that sellers can be agency-based sellers (page 3, lines 2-8). Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to have a seller be an agency-based seller, for the obvious advantage of enabling business to be conducted without the need to contact the seller.

Claim 7 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hensley, Abel and official notice as applied to claim 5 above. Hensley discloses that the seller was a broadcast-based seller (pages 1 and 2).

Claim 8 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hensley, Abel, and official notice as applied to claim 5 above, and further in view of Donner et al. Hensley does not expressly disclose that the conditional purchase offer is a binding conditional purchase offer, but Donner et al. teach this (page 3, lines 2-8). (See also page 6, lines 3-18, for more on conditional purchase offers in Donner et al.) Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of

applicant's invention to make the conditional purchase offer a binding conditional purchase offer, for the obvious advantage of assuring the seller that responding to the conditional purchase offer would be worth his time and trouble.

Claim 11 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hensley, Abel, and official notice as applied to claim 5 above. Hensley does not disclose assigning a random number to each of the at least two sellers, and using the random number to identify the priority seller. However, official notice is taken that it is well known to assign random numbers to decide who shall have priority. (The Selective Service system used until 1973 is one example. Drawing straws, rolling dice, cutting cards, etc., to decide who shall enjoy some privilege or perform some task are other examples.) Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to assign and use random numbers to identify the priority seller, for the obvious advantages of assuring potential sellers that they would have an equal chance at getting business, and to assure potential buyers that they would have equal chances of being assigned any potential seller as a priority seller, rather than, for example, being steered to a high-priced seller in collaboration with the operator of the system.

Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hensley, Abel, and official notice as applied to claim 5 above, and further in view of Donner et al. Hensley does not expressly determining a buyer preference metric for each of the at least two sellers, and using the buyer preference metric to identify at least one of the at least two sellers as the priority seller, but Donner et al. teach doing so (page 9, line16,

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through page 10, line 41). Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to determine and use a buyer preference metric, for the obvious advantage of steering the buyer to a seller who best matches the buyer's wants.

Claim 14 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hensley, Abel, and official notice as applied to claim 5 above. Hensley discloses providing an advantage to the one of at least two sellers identified as the priority seller, namely that the priority seller had the opportunity to make a profit on the sale of a pair of sandals to the buyer, an opportunity which other sellers did not have.

Claim 15 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hensley, Abel, and official notice as applied to claim 5 above. Hensley does not disclose determining whether more than one seller price will satisfy the conditional purchase offer, and selecting the highest seller price. However, official notice is taken that it is well known for sellers to prefer to sell higher-priced goods and services if possible, and to steer potential buyers toward higher-priced goods, which are typically shown first. Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to determine whether more than one seller price would satisfy a conditional purchase offer, and to select the highest seller price, for the obvious advantages of enjoying the greater profits typically resulting from the sale of higher-priced goods and services, and leaving the lower-priced goods and services available for sale to customers only willing or able to pay a lower price.

Claim 16 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hensley, Abel, and official notice as applied to claim 5 above. Hensley discloses that he started off to determine whether there were other sellers that could satisfy the conditional purchase offer, and to perform a low price search of the other sellers, before this was rendered unnecessary by the priority seller's decision to satisfy the conditional purchase offer.

**Claim 9**

Claim 9 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hensley in view of Abel et al. (5,289,371) and official notice. Hensley discloses an allocation method in a buyer-driven system in which conditional purchase offers can be received by or on behalf of a plurality of sellers, the conditional purchase offers including a buyer-specified price for a good or service (page 1, fourteenth text paragraph et subseq.). Hensley does not expressly disclose identifying one of at least two sellers as a priority seller, but by beginning with a particular seller, while knowing that there was another shop down the street (second page, ninth paragraph), Hensley implicitly identified that seller as a priority seller. Hensley discloses providing the priority seller with a first look opportunity to satisfy a conditional purchase offer (first page). Hensley does not disclose that identifying one of at least two sellers as a priority seller includes: determining a number of first look opportunities due to the at least two sellers based on an adjusted market share, determining a number of first look opportunities given to the at least two sellers, and identifying one of the at least two sellers with the largest deficiency between percentage of first look opportunities given and opportunities due as

the priority seller. However, Abel teaches identifying one of at least two sellers as a priority seller on by determining a number of opportunities due to at least two sellers (the number of opportunities due being implicitly derived from the percentage of opportunities due), determining a number of opportunities given to the at least two sellers, and identifying one of the at least two sellers with the largest deficiency between opportunities given and opportunities due as the priority seller (column 11, lines 16-41). Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to identify a priority seller on the basis of opportunities given and opportunities due as claimed, for the obvious advantage of assuring that first look opportunities are allocated in a fair and objective manner.

Hensley does not disclose that conditional purchase offers include a payment identifier specifying a financial account identifier to be used to pay for the good or service upon acceptance of a conditional purchase offer by a seller, but official notice is taken that it is well known to specify financial account identifiers (see Table 3 in Abel, for example). Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to have conditional purchase offers include payment identifiers specifying financial accounts, for the obvious advantage of providing evidence of a buyer's ability and willingness to pay, as well as for enabling actual payment upon the acceptance of a conditional purchase offer.

Hensley does not disclose that providing the priority seller with a first look opportunity to satisfy a conditional purchase offer is done after receiving the buyer-specified price, payment identifier, and authorization, but Abel teaches that payments

are made immediately through subscriber's credit card accounts, implying that payment identifiers (e.g., credit card numbers) and authorizations have been received (column 13, line 55, through column 14, line 10). Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to provide the priority seller with a first look opportunity to satisfy a conditional purchase offer after receiving the buyer-specified price, payment identifier, and authorization, for the obvious advantage of payments through credit card or other accounts to be lawfully carried out.

**Claim 10**

Claim 10 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hensley in view of Abel et al. (5,289,371) and official notice. Hensley discloses an allocation method in a buyer-driven system in which conditional purchase offers can be received by or on behalf of a plurality of sellers, the conditional purchase offers including a buyer-specified price for a good or service (page 1, fourteenth text paragraph et subseq.). Hensley does not expressly disclose identifying one of at least two sellers as a priority seller, but by beginning with a particular seller, while knowing that there was another shop down the street (second page, ninth paragraph), Hensley implicitly identified that seller as a priority seller. Hensley discloses providing the priority seller with a first look opportunity to satisfy a conditional purchase offer (first page). Hensley does not disclose that identifying one of at least two sellers as a priority seller includes: determining a percentage of first look opportunities due to the at least two sellers based on an adjusted market share, determining a percentage of first look opportunities given to the at least two sellers, and identifying one of the at least two sellers with the largest

deficiency between percentage of first look opportunities given and opportunities due as the priority seller. However, Abel teaches identifying one of at least two sellers as a priority seller on just these grounds (column 11, lines 16-41). Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to identify a priority seller on the basis of market share as claimed, for the obvious advantage of assuring that first look opportunities are allocated in a fair and objective manner.

Hensley does not disclose that conditional purchase offers include a payment identifier specifying a financial account identifier to be used to pay for the good or service upon acceptance of a conditional purchase offer by a seller, but official notice is taken that it is well known to specify financial account identifiers (see Table 3 in Abel, for example). Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to have conditional purchase offers include payment identifiers specifying financial accounts, for the obvious advantage of providing evidence of a buyer's ability and willingness to pay, as well as for enabling actual payment upon the acceptance of a conditional purchase offer.

Hensley does not disclose that providing the priority seller with a first look opportunity to satisfy a conditional purchase offer is done after receiving the buyer-specified price, payment identifier, and authorization, but Abel teaches that payments are made immediately through subscriber's credit card accounts, implying that payment identifiers (e.g., credit card numbers) and authorizations have been received (column 13, line 55, through column 14, line 10). Hence, it would have been obvious to one of



ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to provide the priority seller with a first look opportunity to satisfy a conditional purchase offer after receiving the buyer-specified price, payment identifier, and authorization, for the obvious advantage of payments through credit card or other accounts to be lawfully carried out.

**Claim 12**

Claim 12 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hensley in view of Abel et al. (5,289,371) and official notice. Hensley discloses an allocation method in a buyer-driven system, in which conditional purchase offers can be received or considered by or on behalf of a plurality of sellers, the conditional purchase offer including a buyer-specified price for a good or service (page 1, fourteenth text paragraph et subseq.), the method comprising identifying one of at least two sellers as a priority seller; and providing the priority seller with a first look opportunity to satisfy a conditional purchase offer (page 1). Hensley does not disclose determining a market share for each of the at least two sellers, but Abel teaches doing so, and also teaches identifying one of the sellers that could satisfy a purchase offer as the priority seller based on that seller having the largest market share (column 11, lines 16-41, especially lines 38-40). It may also be noted that potential customers sometimes choose to take their business first to the most prominent firm, or firm with the largest market share, typically on the presumption that its products must be good to have won the largest market share, "Nothing succeeds like success." Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to identify one of the sellers having the largest market share that could also satisfy the conditional

purchase offer as the priority seller, for the obvious advantages of dealing with a seller likely to provide quality goods or services at affordable prices, and saving time by giving the first look opportunity to the firm most likely to have the appropriate product or service in its inventory or equivalent.

Hensley does not disclose that conditional purchase offers include a payment identifier specifying a financial account identifier to be used to pay for the good or service upon acceptance of a conditional purchase offer by a seller, but official notice is taken that it is well known to specify financial account identifiers (see Table 3 in Abel, for example). Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to have conditional purchase offers include payment identifiers specifying financial accounts, for the obvious advantage of providing evidence of a buyer's ability and willingness to pay, as well as for enabling actual payment upon the acceptance of a conditional purchase offer.

Hensley does not disclose that providing the priority seller with a first look opportunity to satisfy a conditional purchase offer is done after receiving the buyer-specified price, payment identifier, and authorization, but Abel teaches that payments are made immediately through subscriber's credit card accounts, implying that payment identifiers (e.g., credit card numbers) and authorizations have been received (column 13, line 55, through column 14, line 10). Hence, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of commerce at the time of applicant's invention to provide the priority seller with a first look opportunity to satisfy a conditional purchase offer after

receiving the buyer-specified price, payment identifier, and authorization, for the obvious advantage of payments through credit card or other accounts to be lawfully carried out.

**Claims 29-43**

Claim 32 is parallel to claim 5, and dependent claims 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 38, 40, 41, 42, and 43 are parallel to claims 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 16, respectively, and are therefore rejected on the same grounds.

Claim 36 is parallel to claim 9, and therefore rejected on the same grounds.

Claim 37 is parallel to claim 10, and therefore rejected on the same grounds.

Claim 39 is parallel to claim 12, and therefore rejected on the same grounds.

***Response to Arguments***

Applicant's arguments filed October 4, 2004 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Applicant argues that Examiner's references all disclose traditional seller-driven systems, whereas Applicant's claims recite a buyer-driven system. Examiner replies that on page 1 of the instant application, a buyer-driven system is defined as one in which "the buyer dictates the terms of the offer and one or more sellers decide whether or not to accept the offer." By Applicant's definition, therefore, Hensley, the primary reference, discloses a buyer-driven system, because the buyer dictates the terms of the offer (he will spend no more than \$12.50), and one or more sellers decide whether or not to accept the offer.

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**Conclusion**

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Shkedy (U.S. Patent 6,260,024) discloses a method and apparatus for facilitating buyer-driven purchase orders on a commercial network system.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Nicholas D. Rosen whose telephone number is 703-305-0753. The examiner can normally be reached on 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM, M-F.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Wynn Coggins can be reached on 703-308-1344. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306. Non-official/draft communications can be faxed to the examiner at 703-746-5574.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

*Nicholas D. Rosen*  
**NICHOLAS D. ROSEN**  
**PRIMARY EXAMINER**

November 26, 2004